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## WORLD RIOTS – A NEW CYCLE OF FIGHTING (1)

ECONOFICTION, NONPOLITICS CHILE, CIRCULATION, CLASS STRUGGLE, RIOTS, WORLD ORDER

*"There are decades when nothing happens. And there are weeks in which decades happen."*

Lenin Be it France, Hong Kong, Ecuador, Haiti, Egypt, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Catalonia or Chile – the uprisings mark the beginning of a new cycle of struggles.

The current Riots open up a political situation with polar agents, insurgent rulers, who, however, are by no means confronted by powerless rulers. "Only then" writes Lenin, "when the 'lower classes' no longer want the old and the 'upper classes' can no longer do it in the old way", would a "government crisis" be suitable to turn into a revolutionary crisis. It will therefore be decisive that the uprisings and crises of capital and state overlap in a specific way, or better still that the balance of power shifts in favour of the governed and thus becomes a dangerous ad hoc burden on the system.

However, a systemic crisis can persist at a stable level for some time without being resolved, if the social movements supporting the protests do not oppose the rulers with specific programmes or demands, the fulfilment of which would restore normality. The movements seem not to be satisfied with the fulfilment of demands, they are extremely opposed to certain reforms, but they do not try to decisively challenge the state apparatus. This in turn creates among the governed a superimposition of heterogeneous voices and a productive chaos that drives rather than inhibits the dynamics of the struggles. The uprisings do not develop according to a diffusionist model, i.e. they do not spread like a liquid across a space, but in the best case they swing from one country to another, become viral and emerge in streams of contagion, as we know from the student movement of 1968. The uprising then feeds itself from itself and, like a long-lasting wave, propels its apex in front of it, accelerating to assume variable tempos. In the best case one would have to deal with the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous and the non-simultaneity of the simultaneous at the level of the world order. But we are not there yet, even though the uprising in Chile, for example, was inspired by the events in Ecuador. At least the Leninist model of the weakest link in the chain no longer seems to play a role in the international imperialist context.

The insurgent movements are characterised in all countries by the lack of a hierarchical structure, there are no leaders, who today are almost the counterpart of teamwork, no social democratic or Leninist programme. and if demands are made, they must be corrected at any time. The new revolts are symptomatic of a historical situation in which heterogeneous inter-classist movements are first of all revealing the devastating social conditions caused by neo-liberal policies in the last thirty years, from privatisation in almost all states to the global financial crisis and European austerity policy.

For a long time, not least through the propaganda of its media, Chile was regarded as a successful example of the neoliberal model, which, depending on the economic situation of a country, is characterized by the privatization of the social, tax cuts for the rich, real wage stagnation and the decline of the welfare state, or the reduction of state expenditure, at the expense of low-income sections of the population and those who do not have access to high wages and/or financial assets and therefore have to go into debt. The austerity policy includes a class specific put option, which now has to exercise the majority of the population in many countries. This policy does not simply favour the rich and the financial elite, but in particular those who have large-scale access to the financial markets and assets, or who own the latter, be it mortgage contracts, loans or derivatives.

In Chile, the neoliberal policies of the Chicago Boys introduced after the fall of Salvador Allende in 1973 and the subsequent murderous wave of oppression of the population were cosmetically softened by the transition to democracy, but the essential characteristics of repressive oligarchic neoliberalism were maintained. Chile had remarkably high growth after 1973; while Chile was still in the center of Latin American countries in terms of GDP per capita during 1960-70, it is now the richest country in Latin America. And Chile was rewarded for its high economic growth by membership in the OECD, a club of rich nations, the first South American country to join it. In the 1980s and 1990s, the World Bank supported Chile's flexible labour market policy, which consisted of smashing trade unions and imposing a model of corporate bargaining between capitalists and workers, rather than allowing a union as an umbrella organisation. The World Bank praised Chile as a model of transparency and good governance. The brother of the current Chilean president, one of the descendants of one of Chile's richest families, Pinochet's brother became

known for introducing a funded pension system as Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, under which workers had to pay compulsory contributions from their wages into a pension fund in order to receive post-retirement pensions based, of course, on the performance of the fund. Pensions were thus financed and capitalised, with exorbitantly high fees that made managers rich. Today, most Chilean pensioners receive \$200-300 per month in a country whose price level is about 80% of that of the United States.

Chile leads Latin America in GDP per capita, but also in social inequality. In 2015, income inequality was higher than in any other Latin American country except Colombia and Honduras. It even exceeded Brazil's high social inequality. The lower 5% of the Chilean population have an income level similar to that of the lower 5% in Mongolia, while the upper 2% enjoy an income level similar to that of the upper 2% in Germany.

The distribution of income in Chile is therefore extremely unequal, but it is outperformed by the distribution of wealth. According to Forbes' 2014 figures, the total assets of Chilean billionaires (there were twelve) amount to 25% of Chile's GDP. The next Latin American countries with the highest concentrations of wealth are Mexico and Peru, where billionaires account for about 13 percent of Chile's GDP. Chile is the country in which the share of billionaires in GDP is the highest in the world, and the wealth of Chilean billionaires even exceeds that of Russians compared to the country's GDP. This extraordinary inequality of wealth and income, combined with the complete privatization of social services (water, electricity, etc.) and pensions, which depend on the fluctuations of the stock market, has rarely been made visible, as Chile has managed to increase its GDP per capita. But recent protests show that making social inequality visible is far from enough.

The uprising in Ecuador was an important element for the Chilean movement. As part of an austerity agreement with the IMF, Ecuador's President Lenin Moreno had planned to abolish petrol subsidies. He stubbornly refused to change the austerity program with which he wanted to save \$14 billion a year. For the IMF's 4.2 billion US dollars in aid payments, the government must further cut government spending. The gallon of gasoline rose overnight from \$1.85 to \$2.30 as a result of the subsidy cut, while the price of diesel exploded from \$1.08 to \$2.27. The price of gasoline was cut from \$1.85 to \$2.30. The price of gasoline was also cut from \$1.08 to \$2.27. As a result, the cost of local and long-distance transport and, above all, the transport of goods naturally increased, with food prices also rising. The indigenous CONAIE called for the restoration of gasoline subsidies, but this was described as non-negotiable, leading to direct mass actions on the streets – government institutions, oil wells, highways were captured, demonstrations and the so-called "cacerolazos" were organized, pickets and barricades were set up, shops were plundered, tanks were torched, police and military were captured and detained while the president was forced to flee to Guayaquil. Thus ended a historical cycle of repressive neoliberalism characterized by austerity measures, and at the same time spread a new cycle of class struggle and intensified in the midst of the current structure of globalization and imperialism. In just one week, the indigenous sections of the population in particular abolished an increase in the price of petrol demanded by the IMF. This Ecuadorian victory diffused into the movement of Chilean youth, although the technical and political class composition of the proletariat, the standard of living, the political and economic system of Ecuador are very different from those of Chile. The revolts are not triggered – according to the trend – around the omnipresent questions of climate change, but are circulation battles that initially affect the price, distribution and consumption of goods. Circulation describes a series of interrelated phenomena, namely what is commonly called the market, the capital cycle, the realization of previously produced goods on the market, and the various forms of labor involved in the circulation of goods. When it comes to the subjects of the struggles, those who are in the circulation struggle are, on the one hand, those who have been pushed out of the sphere of production and, on the other hand, those who cannot secure their own reproduction with their wages. This happens precisely when massive deindustrialization processes take place, i.e. when production decreases and capital flees to the service sphere or to financial institutions which, according to Marx, are located in the "noisy sphere of circulation".

Among the insurgents are young people, the unemployed, carers, the self-employed, drivers, other precarious workers and those who are completely out of the normal production cycles. In addition, the struggles are joined on the one hand by parts of the progressive middle class, and on the other by parts of the surplus population and the lumpen proletariat. A traditional labor struggle that could bring these different groups together across regional and national borders seems impossible, but what directly links classes and strata is the rising cost of the goods one relies on for reproduction and the street response with the methods of insurrection. So the uprisings are interclassist. The revolt began in Chile with precarious youth, students and high school students, with these groups quickly gaining support from sections of the left middle class and the more traditional groups of the labor movement. Let us recall Clover's distinction between riot and strike: the uprising is historically and logically related to the strike: The strike is a collective action that revolves around a) the level of the price of labour and better working conditions, b) in which the workers are purely in the position of the worker (not in the position of a proletarian overcoming the system), and that c) takes place in the context of capitalist production, while the uprising a) includes the struggle for price fixing on the markets (circulation), b) does not initially unite its participants, except that they are economically mostly completely dispossessed, and c) takes place in the context of circulation.

One of the peculiarities of states like Chile, Iraq, Lebanon, Ecuador etc. is the existence and numerical importance of a subproletariat, an even poorer social class than the workers, because it is not integrated into a fixed wage system. The attempt of the rulers and the right to criminalize the uprising consists in driving a wedge between the honest, hard-working citizens on the one hand (including the peaceful demonstrators) and the precarious youths, students, high school students and ragged criminals

on the other, in order to take away the dynamics of the antagonism between the rulers and the governed. This kind of criminalization of the movement is an important means of pacification, and one also takes up the subjectivities of class politics, which then seem to take on contours when, for example, a proletarian sees himself far removed from a subproletarian in his social consciousness. However, the workers in these semi-developed countries have no social guarantees, so that the line between proletarian and subproletarian is often blurred. You can be a proletarian and quickly downgraded to subproletarian after dismissal, or you can be a born subproletarian and become a proletarian if you get a permanent job in a company. The battles are often triggered by the price increase of a product, which in part then refers directly to the climate problem: Gasoline. Think of the nationwide riots in Haiti triggered by the abolition of gasoline subsidies, the repeated Gasolinazo protests in Mexico, or the insurrectionist struggle triggered by the increase in bus fares in Brazil. Whenever access to transport becomes indispensable for reproduction due to a lack of public infrastructure, fares become part of the value of the commodity labour or, for the precarious, even part of subsistence and thus the scene of massive confrontation. In 2018, the Gilet Jaunes movement was born in France, immediately conquering the weapons of the Riots: fires, blockades and barricades were a response to Macron's attempt to raise fuel prices in order to allegedly curb climate change, carried out on the backs of rural proletarians who need petrol to get to work because of a lack of public transport in rural areas and the backgrounds of cities.

In Haiti, gas shortages and price rises have led to an open revolt, attacking a US-friendly government. And only recently, Ecuador has been hit by an insurrectional wave in which the indigenous population in particular has responded to an increase in gasoline prices. One of the novelties in the Gilets Jaunes movement is that the state is using climate change as an excuse to cut the social costs of reproducing the population. It is easy to imagine how climate change will be used in developed countries in the future as a government tactic to enforce austerity measures. In this context, the struggles against the increase in gasoline prices are by no means to be seen as climate hostile, because ironically they go hand in hand with the flaring of cars, truly a climate-friendly action of the insurgents.

Even with the looting, the real neediness is not only free access to goods, but on the horizon a world where life is no longer dependent on goods production and capital. In Chile, it has again been shown that the uprising, insofar as it does not remain reduced to the company level of strikes, is directly political, because it is not only about the withdrawal of fares, but about an attack on the state and its repressive structures, on the Cunterinsurgency and the police. Statues and monuments are constantly being dragged down, which shows that this is not only about social reforms and Piñera's resignation, but also about an ice-cold reckoning with the oligarchy, which has once again ruled the country since the fall of the Salvador Allende government and is brutally defending its power. Students and pupils organised large meetings in Chile, which were quickly joined by other sections of the population, and it was only a matter of time before the whole country came to a standstill. Here, too, the struggle was triggered by increases in fares, but it was quickly not just about the increase and the scandal that transport had a price at all, but about resistance to the capitalization of life. In the fights the insurgents quickly realize that the main problem is not the price of transport or energy, but the fact that fossil fuels are a commodity. All the cars on the road transport the proletarians to a job they hate. And fossil fuels are consumed to provide electricity for the networks of capital. The spontaneity of the movement and its practical and radical critique of the totality of capitalist-neoliberal living conditions must be emphasized: Proletarian shopping in supermarkets, shopping malls, pharmacies, banks, etc., the destruction of state infrastructures, the rejection of repressive structures (police, criminal police and military), and an intuitive and fragmentary critique of the totality of capitalized life that one wants to completely change. The insurgents are able to attack the police management rigorously, at least for a short period, although they are confronted with a massive brutalization and militarization of the police, which now shows on a global level that their essence is violence. Nevertheless, there are unexpectedly sharp riots, as in Hong Kong, for example. In Santiago, ENEL's [a Chilean electricity company] company building burned down and several subway stations were set on fire. The highly militarised states usually govern with the declaration of a state of emergency and, as a result, have the military patrol the streets. Nevertheless, there are undreamt-of effects and energies in the riots, and nothing seems the same as before. Despite the strong military presence on the streets, barricades, attacks on state institutions and the sabotage of strategic infrastructures for the movement of capital (toll stations on motorways, subway stations partially destroyed, dozens of flared buses and cars, etc.) continue. There are attacks on bank branches, numerous destroyed ATMs, the siege of police stations and the looting of supermarkets and large shopping centres. While the insurgents' demands, as in Hong Kong, may not yet be anti-capitalist, the struggles have attacked the power of the capitalist class, which governs Hong Kong and can de facto call its own, and that of the Chinese Communist Party. The actions against the police show that many in the movement have gradually lost confidence in state institutions. Strikes and other mobilizations in enterprises (hospitals, the airport, schools and universities, the public sector, etc.) have challenged the legitimacy of capitalist relations.

The search for the true subject of an uprising always ignores the diversity of the masses. In France, for example, from the outset, not only the rural population but also urban populations and inhabitants of the banlieues were part of the yellow vests. And in general, those parts of the surplus population that are denied access to wages are linked to those workers whose wages are no longer sufficient to buy what is necessary for reproduction. And it is once again the young people who lead the actions, the pupils who are locked up in desolate grammar schools, who look like prisons, and who remain subject to savings actions. The tremendous dynamism of the students' movement is being expanded by a proletarian youth who are showing their subversive willingness to fight day after day on the streets. Even if the police management of the situation in the riots is interrupted for phases, at the same time the actions of the police become more brutal, or the penal system intensifies as in Chile. The insurgents often have to deal with an open state terrorism that is concealed by the capitalist media worldwide, but which is today captured

by thousands of cameras and uploaded to the pages of the social media and the counter-information platforms. At the same time, the insurgents have realized that the essential function of the press in their own country is to distort or conceal the facts and create an ideological narrative that serves the interests of capital and the state. The repertoire of brutal attacks by the police is rich, ranging from arrests, notorious beatings, tear gas shot directly at the body, to the use of illegal prisons and murders. At the same time, the rulers deplore the considerable damage caused by the uprising, which, however germinal, is an attack on the private property of capital. In the productive chaos on the streets, a new kind of political class composition and social communication develops that challenges the normality of everyday life to date. Curfews are not respected and hatred of the police is on the rise. In the wild revolts, self-organization and meetings in the various districts are also taking place. It makes sense to bring the question of councils into play in the future, i.e. an institutionalizing anti-capitalist perspective from below, in order to counter the precarious and at the same time gloomy everyday life with an alternative, however sporadic. At the same time, proposals for reforms with which the government tries to take the dynamics out of the uprisings are categorically rejected. At the same time, there is no political force able to establish itself as the leader of the protests and engage in dialogue with the government. This creates confusion among those in power who do not know how to slow down the uprisings in their own way so that the old institutions and narratives can take hold again.

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